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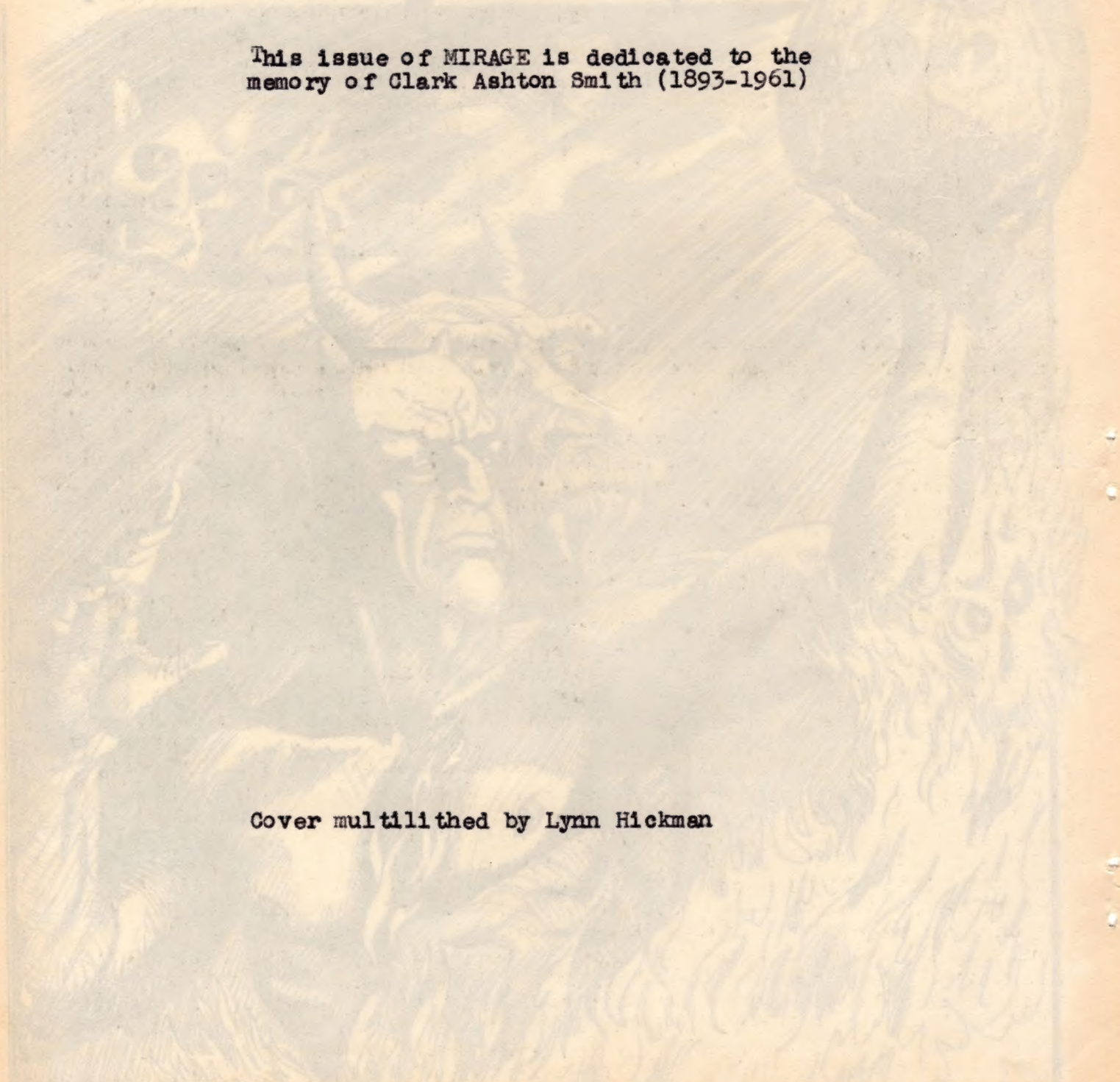
"ECCO IL MONDO"

SEE INSIDE FOR BACKGROUND
DETAILS ON COVER ILLUSTRATION

on
A

MIRAGE

This issue of MIRAGE is dedicated to the
memory of Clark Ashton Smith (1893-1961)



Cover multilithed by Lynn Hickman

CONCERNING THAT COVER—

Commentary by
DAVE PROSSER

Jack:—

"ECCO IL MUNDO

Here is the background on the cover, which should make it more interesting to a few at least: For some time I've had the idea of making a series of paintings based on the theme "The Supernatural in Opera & Music --this cover is the closest I've come to it so far. Goethe's FAUST legend has had more musical works written and inspired by its single theme than any other. Gounod's FAUST is the most popular and Boito's MEFIStOFELE the second, generally. Boito's is by far more true to the original, and by far the more successful in depicting the Arch-demon himself. In this role, the most famous "Mefistofele" of all time was the Russian Feodor Chaliapin. Chaliapin's acting and singing were considered far too rough and unmusical when he first sang in this country, but considering his almost too realistic interpretation of Mefistofele, and the somewhat un-realistic fare to which audiences at the Metropolitan were used to at the time, it is not surprising. In the Prologue (which takes place in Heaven) Chaliapin astounded the audience by appearing near-naked (and quite suddenly) in only a loin-cloth, his body glowing in silver iridescence the length of his well over six-foot height. Chaliapin's make-up and acting were the most startling and realistic and original of anyone within the memory of those early shows -- too much so! In Sc. 2, Act 2 of the Boito work, Faust is shown a witches' sabbat by Satan, in the Brocken in the Harz Mountains. There, dressed in finery by the demons, Mefistofele soliloquizes on a globe he holds in his hands... "Ecco il mondo"--"Here is the world!" he sings, mocking the people and their ignoble acts. Any other actor would and did walk to the center of the stage and simply sing. But Chaliapin -- He would climb like an obscene ape to the throne of seething red rock and poise in arresting might. From hand to hand he tosses the earth as he muses over the puny entity. Concluding, he let fall his cloak, revealing himself in silver-green, glowing evil majesty as the lesser demons formed a writhing sea beneath his towering figure; he shattered the globe on the rocks beneath him. To this day his interpretation remains graven in the minds of all who saw him in this role -- the immortal Chaliapin! ** While Chaliapin excelled in anything he sang, it was due to this role that he decided to become a singer. His first experience with the role was as a spectator when he was 14. He wrote: "It was the supernatural element in FAUST that enthralled and fascinated me. Picture my stupefaction when I saw huge flames streaming over the stage. 'Oh God, the theatre's on fire!' I thought, but as I sprang up to go, a sinister scarlet figure suddenly appeared in the heart of the flames. It bore the resemblance to a man, and had a cap with twin plumes, sharp-pointed beard, mustachios that curled downwards, and beetling brows that sloped toward his ears! I was so terrified I could not move. I nearly died of fear when I saw the glitter of flames in his eyes; every time he blinked I saw a flash of fire. 'Oh Jesus, it's the Devil himself!' I thought, and mentally crossed myself. The fire-flashing glances completely obsessed me. When I saw him at intermission drinking vodka and, surprisingly, eating bilberry jam, I stared into his eyes and tried to discover the source of the sparks he sent forth, but the more I peered the less I saw! I could only conjecture that he supplied himself with fiery glances before going onto the stage....." Chaliapin's later mastery of make-up and original touches he placed in his performances qualified him for the title "Lon Chaney of the Opera." He has never been equalled, for Chaliapin's genius was one which appears far too rarely than once in a lifetime. The cover illustration is taken from photos of Chaliapin in this role. pp



An Amateur Magazine Devoted to the Discussion and presentation of imaginative literature.....

JACK L. CHALKER, editor

publisher, DONALD STUDEBAKER

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OVER THE EDGE

I receive an incredible amount of still more incredible mail. Someday I'll find out just who sends it to me -- but not right now. I've had two in the past few weeks that were outstanding -- both unsigned, and with no return addresses. The first I got quite a laugh out of, and I'm sure that you people that received the last issue of MIRAGE will, too. It was a handwritten, unsigned letter postmarked from Hawaii asking me to form and lead a society of humanistic athiests in this city! I am not at all familiar with this new branch of the Humanists (although I'm sure that we've all seen their ads in the SF mags) but I do believe that any organization that does not have enough nerve to sign their own name(s) or put on a return address worthy of any consideration by anyone. Their doctrines seem to be right good -- man to help man -- but it did seem to be mixed in with nature-worship, I dunno. Hitler called himself a humanist. The Communists say that they're humanists. They believe in no God, no hereafter. Oh, well. If there are any who belong to this particular branch in the readership, please let me know a bit more about it. I'm sure it would be quite interesting....**The second wasn't really a letter, but a series of ads -- some quite interesting, others quite puzzling. While it was postmarked in Arizona, it seems to advertise some publications from a British concern known as "Markham House Press, Ltd." They are both publishers and distributors, it seems. The first ad is for a new book -- EATING YOUR WAY TO HEALTH, by Ruth Bircher -- the new food discoveries that can make you healthy and strong. Bircher seems to be a famous Swiss health specialist with some interesting discoveries -- not \$5.00 worth, though (to me, anyway). The second ad was also from Markham, but this appears to be published by them, too. It's a magazine of history and speculation called PAST AND FUTURE, and I might just see what it is like. But then I come to something odd -- a sample copy of a periodical called CLOSER UP -- DON BELL REPORTS "The American Point of View." It seems that Mr. Bell believes the U.S. to be secretly run by an organization known as "The Council on Foreign Relations," and even includes the membership roster. In effect, he claims that the great capitalists of the nation, through this group, run a one-party system and that the democratic face is merely a facade. Members include John Foster Dulles, Dean Acheson, Joe Kennedy, etc. I was surprised at the omission of Daddy Warbucks. He accuses Jack Kennedy, too. He does not name Nixon. He does, in fact, accuse the entire Kennedy administration. His list of Dead Members, like Dulles, includes several in the Eisenhower regime. I did not see Eisenhower, either. I know that the CFR exists, but at the risk of sounding naive I will say that I cannot believe in a secret "puppet master" plot ruling us here. He notes that his list of membership was not from CFR sources, since it was "to be kept from the eyes of the peasants." Peasants. That's us, boys and girls. Or, most of us. He says that it is the "administrative arm of a secret government which is financed by member-control of the tax-exempt multimillionaire foundations headed by the Rockefeller-Ford-Carnegie combine" and that "its banking council rules the world, at least in the financial sense." The latter is almost true -- those financial giants do control the economic world. But what of that secret government in the background?

As I have said, I know little about either this Humanistic sect nor Don Bell, and I would appreciate enlightenment on both subjects.....

Bell's headquarters are in Florida, and if anyone wants to subscribe to his reports, I'll be glad to supply the address. \$20.00 for a 4-page report, no matter how interesting, and no matter whether you get 52 of 'em a year. Is your curiosity worth that much? Mine's not.

CONTEST--The National Fantasy Fan Federation is running a story contest for CASH prizes. I urge any of you who write fantasy, SF, or weird fiction to enter. You've nothing to loose, and a lot to gain. Aside from more than \$100 offered in prizes by the NFFF, the final judge is Cele (editor, AMAZING, FANTASTIC) Goldsmith -- and, I'm told, she's enthusiastic about finding new talent. This means that the winners will undoubtedly find their stories in one of her magazines, at pro rates! Deadline, however, is September 30, 1961 -- so don't delay. It'll probably be August before you read this, and that won't leave you much time. Here's what you do: (1)-write a story. (2)- place your name on a slip of paper, seal it in an envelope, and attach it to the manuscript. DO NOT PLACE YOUR NAME ON THE MANUSCRIPT ITSELF! (3)-send it to: NFFF Story Contest, Edward Ludwig, preliminary judge, 455 N. Tuxedo Avenue, Stockton 4, California. You could have a goldmine and a future career, here.....

POLICY: This is not a fanzine devoted entirely to fantasy and weird tales. It is not another Lovecraft Collector. We will accept any manuscript, fiction or article, on any subject in the world if it is good enough to meet our rising standards and would be of interest to our readers. It has been what it has been simply because you people have sent us nothing else. We cannot help but be a fantasy fanzine when we depend almost entirely on unsolicited manuscripts, although as a fantasy fan I encourage such contributions. The reason for less fannish stuff in MIRAGE is because I think better stuff than I could get in here can be found in almost any other fan magazine. See? Thus the accusation that my editorials aren't uniform with the issue is false -- we present anything. And if you don't like the editorial, don't read it! I write what I please in my magazine which has taken countless hours of time and more money than I've got. I reserve the right to say what I please. Besides, what could I say if I stuck to fantasy? There just isn't any real activity in that field.

ABOUT "A MATTER OF TASTE"--I also reserve the right to cuss out anyone in here, and let the insulted party sock me. I did it just for the reasons Buck printed Revelation -- just to see what would happen. I mean, even though untrue, "they are unfit to be human beings" was a beautiful line, wasn't it? I didn't like the story nor its implications, and I did not want to be ignored. At least I proved that people DO read editorials. ~~Waaa~~. I make no appologies in MIRAGE's lettercol, nor its editorials.

Dave Prosser's cover and Ray Nelson's story caused a lot of comment on "A Matter of Taste" in a different way. Prosser's cover, say Messrs. Warner and Davidson, is insulting....mostly to the Jews (see Hindsight!) Messrs. Warner (again), Bryant, and a few others point out the dirty theme of Nelson's "Poems of Pan." Sure was, wasn't it?

-----Jack L. Chalker-----

Here's an old dog who knew an awful lot of old tricks!

A LESSON IN RAIN- MAKING

by John Murdock and Marion Zimmer Bradley

I was settin' at the kitchen table when Uncle Silas came stomping in, all grimy with dust and sweat. His icy blue eyes flared at Aunt Phyl and me as he went to the pump to get a drink. He pumped a minute, the old thing a-creakin' and complainin', not wanting to give up any water. He finally got a dipperful, gulped it noisily down, and then turned to look at us.

"We need rain," he snorted, "Bad-like. Even the well's goin' now. I'll hafta get busy tomorry, and get us some rain!"

Aunt Phyl's timid little face quivered like a rabbit's. "By daylight light? Can't you do it tonight?"

"Conditions ain't right," he stated flatly. "'Sides, it's time William thar was learnin' the secret, if he's ever gonna be any use to us."

"Silas! That boy's not but fourteen! You leave him be!"

"And I'm over sixty! The boy mightn't ever get another chance. William, you're learnin' rain-making tomorry!"

"Yes sir!" I said, awed-like.

Rain-making! Rain-making, the secret of Uncle Silas' success at dry-land farming. Ever'body 'round these parts wondered how come Uncle Silas always had the best of crops and stuff. He was richer than anyone I knew --although to look at him you'd never know it.

Ever since I'd come to live with Uncle Silas and Aunt Phyl, I'd wondered and wondered how Uncle Silas made rain. I knew he did it -- but I never knew how or when. I never dared to ask, either. My Uncle Silas was a strict man. He was good to me, in his own way, but he was awful strict

How often, during the night, had I heard the thunder and seen the lightning grip the sky, and heard the rain rattle out of a clear starry midnight -- and then Uncle Silas would come stomping in out of the wet. He always did it at night. Never in the daytime, before now. Afear'd, I guess, of the neighbors catching on.

We ate a silent supper, Uncle Silas deep in thought. Finally, he said "Nope, tomorry's too much risk. 'Sides, conditions are a-changing. William, you get your nightly chores done up, then you get a lantern ready. Jump, now!"

I jumped. In no time at all, I had my chores finished, and a lantern filled and pumped up, ready to light.

The kitchen clock crept toward eleven. Aunt Phyl fell asleep in her rocking chair. I'd never been up so late before, and I was beginning to get sleepy myself when Uncle Silas roused up from his kitchen chair. "Now, William," he said, "Conditions are a-gettin' just prime. Light the lantern and come outside into the yard.

I did as he said, and Uncle Silas took the lantern and set it on an old tree stump. "Now you listen, and pay particular mind to everything I says," he told me. "You hear me now?"

I choked out a "Yessir," and he grinned just a little. "Here we go, then."

He turned around, and began the awfulest mumbo-jumbo I'd ever heard. Careful as I listened, I couldn't for the life of me make out what he was saying. He howled and he yowled and he chanted and he hollered and he squalled, all the time cutting the craziest jig and waving his hands this way and that. I tried to pay him attention at first like he told me, but but finally I had to quit. To tell the truth, I came plumb near to laughing at him, but I knew I didn't dare. He'd have skinned me alive for sure if I had.

Before very long a little cloud shut out part of the stars, and a bolt of lightning forked down out of it. There was a roll of thunder, and then Uncle Silas grabbed the lantern and yelled at me to run. We scooted for the house. But the big raindrops splashed down, and we were drenched through by the time we reached the kitchen door. The water was running off him, and his shirt clung slickly to his back. Anyone else would have looked funny, but not my Uncle Silas.

He glared down at me with them fiery eyes of his.

"Well, William, what do you think of your Uncle Silas now? Who says Silas Short cain't make up a storm? Hey?"

"I -- I, uh, don't rightly know, Uncle," I stammered.

He grunted at me. "Think you can make it rain, boy?"

"N - no, sir."

"Well, I didn't expect you to learn all that in one lesson. Took me a while, too. But now you know that it's real -- don't you?"

"Yessir. All the other times I heard all that carryin' on, I thought it was just coyotes and prairie owls," I said.

He looked sharp at me. "Haw!" he chuckled. "Now, git to bed, boy. I want to town early tomorry with the eggs.

*

While I hustled through the chores the next morning, hitching the team to the wagon and loading the eggs, I thought about rain-making. The ground was really damp that morning; it must've rained most of the night.

Our fields were green and fresh-looking under the broiling sun. Uncle Silas sure was a powerful man, and I was glad he was going to teach me rain-making. He was a good farmer all around; just look at the bunch of eggs I just loaded up! Uncle's eggs were better than anybody else's, and he demanded top prices. He got 'em, too. Even Old Man Stacy paid him thirty-five cents.

If possible, I was even more impressed with Uncle's rain-making by the time we got to town. All the country 'round was dying for water; the crops hung dead and brown in the fields, and the roads kicked up choking dust. I figured Uncle Silas must be feelin' good, but when we pulled up the team in front of Stacy's feed and produce store he looked at me sterner than before.

"Trouble," he said.

I couldn't see any trouble anywhere. I wondered if Uncle Silas had strained himself the night before. Anyway, we went into the feed store. I didn't see Old Man Stacy anywhere, but his son Leon was tending shop for him.

Uncle Silas spoke right sharp. He'd never liked Leon, and I wondered if that was the trouble he'd meant.

"What're you givin' for eggs this week?"

"Thirty-five cents to respectable farmers," Leon said, "Twenty cents to you, Short. Take it or leave it."

Uncle Silas hitched up his chin. "I got better eggs than any man roundabouts!" he retorted. "Top price! You take it or leave it!"

"Then you can let your eggs rot!" Leon Stacy leaned over the counter. "Come to think of it, I ain't takin' no eggs off your hands. I was by your place last night late. I saw you and William out there a-makin' up a storm. Everybody 'round here knows how you make your farm pay like it does. Folks wouldn't mind if you'd make rain for them, too, but you neve do. The rain just falls on your land, and other folks ain't even got enough for their chickens! You're nothin' but a damned he-witch, and we ain't a-takin' no more of your eggs, or anything else, either! Now you get out of this here stop before I holler for the Marshal!"

I thought Uncle Silas would bust for sure. I never saw him look meaner. "I let folks alone," he snarled, "so long as they lets me alone! But you take my word, Leon Stacy, you're payin' for this. You better never snoop 'round my farm no more, or I'll put a lightning bolt on your hind end!" He turned his back on young Stacy. "C'mon, William. We're goin' home."

I followed him, feeling shaky. Come to think of it, I wondered why Uncle Silas did only make rain for his own farm and nowheres else. Seemed to me like he could have done it for some other folks just as easy, only he never. I wondered why, but I knew I'd never dare to ask him that neither. I knew, just as sure as I sat in that there wagon, that Leon Stacy would dare Uncle.

And sure enough, he did. It wasn't but the next day that Uncle saw Leon slipping along a hill-top overlooking our back forty. Leon saw him, and run, but Uncle brought up a cloud -- just a little one -- and burned Leon as he ran with a tiny forky thunderbolt in the rump.

Aunt Phyl fretted about that. "Your uncle is getting vicious," she complained to me in secret. "Silas was always a strict man, Willie, and a hard one -- but he was never mean like this before. I always told him that if he fooled with the devil's work, sooner or later he'd get the devil in him, too, and get himself killed sure." But she didn't dare speak to Uncle Silas neither -- not any more than I did. Even when Leon Stacy came around after Uncle with his 30-30, and Uncle burned him so bad that Old Man Stacy had to take him to the hospital down at the county seat, there was nothing either of us could say or do. Anyhow, maybe what Uncle Silas said was true -- he couldn't just stand there and let Leon shoot him. It was self-defense, maybe. Only it wasn't self-defense when, that same night, Stacy's feed store burned down to the ground. Struck by a bolt of lightning, or so folks said.

This time Uncle Silas had gone too far, and people were really riled up about it. They swarmed up the road like a flock of bees. Angry bees.

Some way, Uncle Silas always knew things like that beforehand. He had a cloud made up ready for them -- a big one -- and when they started rattling on the gate and yelling, he sent down a coupl've bolts, and hol-lered at them to go back where they belonged or they'd end up in the hospital alongside Leon Stacy.

But when folks are that mad, they couldn't be scared at the same time. They didn't pay him no mind. Somebody let loose with a shotgun, but Uncle dodged behind the woodpile. Aunt Phyl and I were hiding in the kitchen, but we heard them yelling "Lynch him! String up the polecat!"

The Marshal was trying to hold the people back. I could hear him yelling louder than the others, saying that it was against the law, and all that. But somebody let off that shotgun again, and that sent Uncle clean off his head with mad. He gave some more hollerin' and yellin', and out of the cloud came the thing we feared the most in our parts; Uncle Silas had whipped up a tornado.

The wind was roaring something awful. Lightning bolts sizzled down, and the thunder boomed like Judgment Day. The funnel was swirling down out of the cloud. I peeked out the window and dove for the kitchen door, then stopped. I wanted to run for the storm cellar, but I wanted worse to see what would happen. Aunt Phyl was crying, her apron up to her eyes. "He can't ever control that tornado! It'll get away from him sure!"

I peeked out the window again. The tornado was a whirling, roaring, bucking fury. The people had scattered like chickens run when Aunt Phyl shakes her apron, and they were runnin' down the road towards town; and even over the thunder we could hear Uncle Silas yelling. "How d'ye like that, eh? Y'all went a mite too far with Si Short! I'll learn ye, I'll learn ye not to come meddling 'round with me! Your town is just about as good as gone!" And he stood there and laughed, the lightning sizzling to the right and left of his grey head.

"If that tornado gets loose from him it won't be the town that goes, it'll be his own house!" Aunt Phyl gasped, and ran out into the yard, her skirts tugging every which way in the wind, and grabbed Uncle Silas by the shoulders. I couldn't hear what she screamed at him, and while I saw his mouth jerk at her, the words flapped away in that tremendous wind and I couldn't hear them, neither. Then Aunt Phyl broke away from him and ran wildly for the storm cellar, all tore up with cryin' and yellin' for me. I quit the house just then and ran for the cellar too.

I just made it.

When we looked out again, the sky was clear, and the house was still there. The tornado was gone.

So was Uncle Silas.

The Marshal was standin' in front of our gate. Aunt Phyl started toward him, but she was shakin' so bad she almost fell over, and I hustled after her and put my arm around her shoulders.

The Marshal twisted his hat in his hands before he spoke. "I'm awfully sorry, Mrs. Short," he said. "That was a helluva -- excuse me, ma'am -- a -- a -- awful way for a man to go, but I guess it served him right. I guess that settles everything, too. I mean, folks ain't got no quarrel with you or William, here.

She swallowed hard. "Did you see it, Marshal?"

"Yes ma'am. The tornado come back and carried Silas right up into the center of the cloud, and that was the last we saw of him."

Aunt Phyl shook her head slowly. "I tried to get him to let go of the tornado," she said, "But he was bound and determined he was going to hit the villiage with it. He said they was just mostly mad because they wanted him to witch up rain for them, too, and now he was going to do them one better. I--I reckon it just got to be too much for him, just like I always said. She wasn't crying now, but her lips quivered. "He was a good man -- in his own way -- only it had to be his way, and that's not good."

"What was it, William?" the Marshal asked. "You ain't gonna give me no trouble by makin' rain now, are you?"

"No sir!" I just yelled it at him. I wondered why I'd ever wanted to learn rain-making. I knew I'd never want to do it now.

Only somehow, I was just as glad that I never learned how.....

--John Murdock and Marion Z. Bradle

.....

Remember Doctor Keller's highly praised
NOTES ON LOVECRAFT last issue. Well, it
seems that the article wasn't quite all
that it seemed to be.....

A REBUTTAL TO LOVECRAFT CRITICISM?

A GROUP OF LETTERS,

by August Derleth

10 April 1961

I have read Dr. Keller's NOTES ON LOVECRAFT -- a piece I knew he had written, and one which I tried gently to dissuade him from publishing largely because, being a writer without anything resembling style himself (save only in the vein of THE SIGN OF THE BURNING HART), writing as he does in a sadly pedestrian manner, he lacked the qualifications to judge Lovecraft's style, and without an imagination similar to Lovecraft's, he placed himself in the position of being attacked for his criticism. Dr. Keller has distinguished himself in the field of science fiction and in that of the psychiatric horror tale; he is primarily an idea-man, not a stylist, and a social satirist, and in this vein he has done, I think, some of the most telling science-fiction pieces in our language, despite the fact that all too often his characters are wooden, his dialogue stilted and unnatural.

Naturally, Dr. Keller's article is filled with errors. "Once he (Lovecraft) thought of a tale he could not rest until it was placed on paper." This is nonsense; Lovecraft often put off writing his stories until he had fulfilled a task of revision, no matter how onerous; and once he had a draft down, he put it away, did not even type it, months later rewrote it months after that -- sometimes years -- readied it for typing, and sometimes he never typed them, this was done by friends -- Wandrei, Long, Barlow, myself, and no doubt others. "On the walls of these buildings were obscene pictures" -- familiar as I am with HPL's writings, I recall very few "obscene pictures," in fact, at the moment I can't recall any, but my memory may be faulty in this. "...to call upon their god Cthulhu" -- Cthulhu was only one of the "gods" of the Lovecraft panoply. "...heroes who successfully fought the "Old Gods" -- it was the "Ancient Ones" who were fought -- the "Old Gods" or "Elder Gods" were also antipathetic to the "Ancient Ones," were NOT the same; this is only one example of Dr. Keller's confusion about Lovecraft's work.

"He leaves nothing to the reader's imagination." This again is ridiculous for Lovecraft has been accused of leaving too much to the reader's imagination. It is simply untrue. "The Old Gods waiting to destroy mankind." -- see above. "A prison for Cthulhu when he was conquered by the younger gods." -- of course, it was the Elder Gods who imprisoned Cthulhu. ...THE LURKER AT THE THRESHOLD, -- well, you have said about this error of Dr. Keller's all that needs to be said, on page 5 of the same issue containing his article. ...THE SHUNNED HOUSE. Dr. Keller evidently does not understand this story -- he makes no differentiation between the psychic and the physical; Lovecraft did. It begins at this point to

look as if Dr. Keller read Lovecraft only to carp, not to make any constructive criticism. ...Same error about Cthulhu in reference Dr. Keller makes to THE CALL OF CTHULHU.

Dr. Keller nowhere exhibits his complete lack of understanding than he does in his reference to THE OUTSIDER and the naming of THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS. Both Wandrei and I are on record as setting forth that HPL's best stories are a little group including THE DUNWICH HORROR, THE RATS IN THE WALLS, THE COLOUR OUT OF SPACE, THE MUSIC OF ERICH ZANN, THE WHISPERER IN DARKNESS -- THE OUTSIDER would follow somewhere after those. But Dr. Keller evidently did not read our introduction to THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS, wherein we clearly set forth that H.P. Lovecraft was "an outsider in his time" -- it would take someone wholly unimaginative to fail to understand that our choice of THE OUTSIDER as part of the title was not solely in reference to HPL's story, but also to HPL himself. Nothing in what Dr. Keller has written indicates that he understands the story itself, either. He misquotes the story. He says the story should end with "a cold and unyielding surface of polished glass." This is where it does end. Dr. Keller has evidently trusted to a faulty memory to criticize this story; he is criticizing a state of affairs which does not exist and never did exist. The previous "touch" line to which Dr. Keller's reference evidently was meant to be made was "my fingers touched the rotting outstretched paw of the monster beneath the golden arch." Dr. Keller clearly confused this with the final line.

I do not mean to question in any way Dr. Keller's sincerity; Dr. Keller is the soul of honor, a gentleman, and a student of his fellow men; but I do question his judgment. He has every right to sit in judgment on Lovecraft; but Kathleen Norris also has the right to sit in judgment on Tolstoi for what such judgment is worth.

15 April 1961

A propos Lovecraft criticism in general -- it is only comparatively recently that the man himself has come under fire, usually from people who are prejudiced against his fiction, and people who do not know very much about the man, have never taken the trouble to inform themselves, and have no intention of doing so. Most such criticism is meaningless; it is only the expression of an opinion, no more. As such it is perfectly legitimate -- a cat may look at a king, you know -- but it is only opinion, not even informed opinion, and certainly not legitimate criticism.

26 April 1961

You ask me about THE DUNWICH HORROR. Bear in mind, as Dr. Keller evidently did not, that Lovecraft wrote "The crowd stirred uneasily, recalling that his sprayer was expected to give the unseen horror a moment of visibility." Bear in mind also, "that the men were evidently trying to get to a subordinate peak which overlooked the swath"(made by the Thing)"at a point considerably ahead of where the shrubbery was now bending." In short, the spray was to be shot down upon the Thing, not up at it; and the intention was to get "a moment of visibility." Nowhere does HPL say he hoped through his characters to illumine the entire entity. Nowhere does HPL write that the sprayer actually served that purpose. Dr. Keller has simply assumed that it did because of what Curtis Whateley, watching through the telescope, described as seeing. Curtis had snatched the tele-

scope from Wesley Corey and "saw that Rice, from the party's point of vantage above and behind the entity, had an excellent chance of spreading the potent powder with marvelous effect." The others, turning to the telescope after Curtis dropped it, saw nothing. Italics here, are my own, not Lovecraft's. Previously, without the telescope, they saw 'only an instant's flash of grey cloud -- a cloud about the size of a moderately large building -- near the top of the mountain." Also, allowing for all Dr. Keller's premises, nowhere does HPL tell us what was in the sprayer; would Dr. Keller have been more satisfied if HPL had told us that the sprayer contained a chemical formula which, upon contact with any part of the entity, would have brought about a brief chemical change in the entire entity permitting sight of it for a few moments? This sort of thing, I repeat, is picayune carping; it is the sort of thing that can be done with absolutely anything written if one tries hard enough.

Wesley Corey
August
Derleth

PREMONITION

I am frightened... How can I find
The meaning of this dire command?
These terrors lurking just behind
The hidden corners of my mind?

Too sane and well-informed am I
To credit "warnings" -- or the kind
Of superstitious nonsenses that lie
Embalmed in lore of days gone by...

A glandular imbalance, the neuroses' clutch...
We know, today, may cause anxiety.
Modern science has explained this much,
At least, of "supernatural mystery" and such.

But.. no matter that I understand
This problem has a physiological touch,
Fear stirs a warning -- a demand
That clutches my heart like a giant hand!

---G.M. Carr

You will find the freethinker in every society, no matter how primitive that society may be. The problem, of course, is how to tell him apart -- especially if you don't know about what he is rebelling.....

THE SUN-GOD

by Edward W. Bryant, Jr.

Nicolai Harrison pushed on through the forest of giant yellow-leaved trees. Five kilometers behind him was the shattered wreckage of his airscooter; ahead, through twenty-one kilometers of dense forest, was Von Kelleam Settlement. Harrison cursed bitterly. Already his feet, unaccustomed to clambering over fallen forest giants and wading across streams with rough-pebbled bottoms were becoming tender and blistered. He wished futilely that the nearest aircraft capable of rescuing him wasn't a continent away, and that the forests of Wilhelmsworld weren't so dense as to prevent ground vehicles from setting out from Von Kelleam to pick him up.

The minivision cube on Harrison's belt buzzed. He unclipped it and held it up in front of his face. The three-inch image swirled for a second, then resolved itself into the black-bearded and scowling visage of Jan Martens, the colony sub-commander.

"What the hell are you trying to do?" he snarled. Harrison smiled bleakly. "At least you'll get a good hike out of it!"

"Thanks a lot for the sympathy," replied Harrison somewhat painfully as he trod on a particularly sharp stone splinter. "It wasn't really my fault -- wrecking the scooter, that is. I just happened to hit the wrong air-current at the right time. That I hit a tree at the same time I hit the air current was just an unlucky coincidence."

"No doubt you were well below a safe altitude so that you could risk this colony's one and only airscooter taking more of those damnable pictures," retorted Martens.

"Nothing risked, nothing gained," answered Harrison. "And those 'damnable pictures' as you call them will bring a fortune out in Galactic center, especially those unicorn shots."

"That may be," admitted Martens, "but I wouldn't want to be in your shoes if Galactic Security ever gets wind of your selling pornographic tri-dims to the equine races in the Horsehead Nebula. Personally, I'd as soon turn you in for bounty as look at you if it weren't for the ten percent I get of your profits." He sighed dramatically. "The straights an honest Colonial officer must go through to earn a livable income!"

Harrison snorted. "Honest Colonial officer! If you are --" He broke off suddenly, and in the minivision screen Martens saw his eyes squint. "Natives! You didn't tell me that there were any natives! About a dozen

of them coming this way, all armed with odd-looking spears. Dangerous?"

"Don't worry," said Martens. "We trade for food with them occasionally. In fact, they may be the answer to your sore feet. When we first landed on this planet last year, we found the natives to be quite tractable once we had shot a few of their leaders. After that it was easy to get them under our thumbs. At first they were rather rebellious, until we found a way to halt their resistance to us once and for all. Our sociologist found out the interesting scrap of information that the natives worshipped a central sun-diet called Shilth. So, one day, at one of their religious ceremonies, we set off a light grenade and presented ourselves as the local emissaries of Shilth. The flash of the burst quickly persuaded them that we were genuine Children of the Sun, and from then on we were gods."

"Good," replied Harrison, all fear gone. "Maybe I'll have them make me a sedan chair and carry me into Von Kelleam in style. They're about fifty yards away now, and they don't look any too friendly. Maybe I'd better remind them that I'm one of their sancrosact Sun Children."

He pulled a magnesium signal flare out of his pack, activated the detonator, and hurled it midway between the advancing natives and himself. The flare hit the ground and burst in a coruscating volcano of white sparks.

The band of gaily painted natives looked a bit cowed, retreated a few steps, whereupon they halted, belligerently staring at Harrison from a safe distance.

Harrison unclipped the lingualator from his belt and spoke into the tiny microphone. He adjusted the settings so that his speech rolled forth in an impressively sonorous voice speaking in the native's tongue.

"Worshippers of Shilth," he boomed. The natives raised their spears toward the sky in a gesture that Harrison guessed was religious. "Worshippers of Shilth," he began again, "as I have shown you by the Sign, I am a child of Shilth. I demand that you give me unceasing servitude and assistance from this moment on until I release you from your holy duty."

A tall, chartreuse native, evidently the spokesman for the group, came forward to parley, gingerly skirting the patch of still smoking ground where the flare had gone off. He stopped ten feet from Harrison and began to speak. The receptors of the lingualator picked up his voice and ingested it through its complex circuits until it was moderately understandable to Harrison's ear.

"You are Child of Shilth?" asked the spokesman, seemingly hesitant.

"I am," replied Harrison, and imperiously "I demand that you turn yourself and the others of your group over to my command immediately."

The spokesman said nothing, but turned on his heel and strode back to his waiting companions.

Harrison spoke into the minivision mike. "I've got them in the palm
(concluded on page 18)

"Old Man Noah knew a thing or two,
And because he knew a thing or two he thought he knew it all.
Some say he was an also-ran,
He was the original circus man..." --Old college song.

Maybe that was the trouble...

.....AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

a very unusual piece

BY David L. Travis

The whole thing, of course, began with God. In the beginning, He created the heavens and the earth. On the fifth day He created the beasts and the birds and all living things. On the sixth day He created man and gave to him dominion over the earth. The best authorities agree with this much.

At first, of course, this dominion was rather meaningless, since there were only a few men available. The beasts of the fields were pretty much their own boss. Some of these developed idiosyncracies which made them incompatible with man. This, of course, was just too bad for them. Among these unfortunates were: the roc, the chimera, the faun, and the centaur. And, of course, the fastidious Unicorn. The Unicorn could be approached only by the most virginal, and, in order for man to people the earth, as instructed, the Unicorn's condition could seldom be met.

As mankind began to obey God's dictates and multiply and people the earth, the beasts began to find less and less freedom. The roc gave up and flew no longer and the chimera agreed. Pan hid himself in the darkest forest and danced and played so seldom that he grew rusty. His fauns pined away. The centaurs found man incompatible. All these beasts retreated before the advance of man until they were scarcely to be found anywhere. Men saw them only in the most remote settings and most people never saw any of them. Thus these beasts became nothing but myths, legends; fairy tales to be told to children on dark nights.

The animal most affected by the spread of man was the Unicorn. Mankind is subject to a number of human weaknesses, if I may be facetious. The Unicorn found less and less of the purity and innocence necessary for his happiness, and thus retreated and hid from man and became a bedtime story even sooner than most.

These legends and stories were repeated down through the years until we come to the time of Noah. Not everybody knows that Noah was quite a person. Noah is credited with being the first man in the discovery of the fermentation of the grain, and the first man in a long line of men to become intoxicated.

Noah had three sons; Ham, Shem, and Japeth, and in spite of his experiments in distillation, was called a good man by all. And good men

were getting harder and harder to come by in those days.

Noah was a good and affectionate father, given to telling his sons stories of the days gone by, and many of the stories that start "once upon a time." Noah was a very good storyteller and his tales of yore made a deep impression on little Japeth.

"Gee, father," he would say, "when will I see a unicorn?"

"Go to sleep, Jay," Noah would reply. "If you're a real good boy maybe someday you'll see one." But Noah didn't really believe in what he said. Yes, the sad fact was that in all the world, only little Japeth believed in the unicorn.

The good Lord looked over his map of the world which was marked with lights that showed the location of all the good people on the earth, and became sadder and sadder as he saw the lights wink out, one by one, until at last only one solitary light was left. It was in the house of Noah. Then the Lord started thinking, and he said to himself "I guess I'll have to start all over, but instead of starting from scratch, I'll use Noah to begin again."

Shortly after, Noah began to hear voices, and when he started to do what these voices said he should do, the neighbors all nodded their heads and said "Look what happens to a man who is good. Even Noah has cracked under the strain," and tapping their heads wisely, they went back to their serious business of being bad.

When Noah got the Lord's message, he wanted to jump on his horse and ride from town to town shouting "The Deluge is coming!" But he saw immediately that this would do no good, and besides, he had his orders. So he started building his ark. Mrs. Noah and Mrs. Ham and Mrs. Shem all helped and soon the ark was finished. It was time to begin gathering the animals.

Jepeth watched the ark fill with animals and began to be concerned when he saw that almost all the compartments were full. And there were no unicorns. "Father, when are we going to get the unicorns?" Noah, weary from his labors, replied, "Jay, I'm sorry. There is no such beast as a unicorn. These stories originated from a narwhal, or a rhinoceros, or an antelope with one horn broken off. It's just a story, a legend. Now, run along, I'm busy."

After that, Japeth spent most of his time wandering in the hills, searching for a unicorn. He could have been heard to mutter "He is not a narwhal or a rhino-- whatever it is. He's a unicorn! I know it!" Once or twice he thought he saw or heard something, but it was always something else -- a horse or a neighbor laughing at "Noah's folly."

Time grew short and the rain clouds gathered. The ark was nearly full and Japeth had seen no signs of a unicorn. Noah had to pick him up bodily as the last pair of wildebeeste was installed. Just in time, too, because then the rains came and it rained and it rained and soon the ark was floating. The family was able to rest -- all but Japeth, who spent most of his time on deck, staring at the fog and rain. Thus it was that none of the other six humans on board saw what he saw. The mists and rain

had cleared for a moment, and there he was on a little rise of ground. Pure white; the golden horn gleaming, right in the middle of his forehead. One white forehoof was raised to hold it above the water. Then the mists closed down again, for the ark: a short time. For the unicorn-

....

Forever.

-----David L. Travis

THE SUN-GOD by Edward W. Bryant, Jr. (Concluded from page)

of my hand now, Jan. I'll be seeing you in a coupl've hours," he concluded jauntily.

On Marten's face was the look of someone who has something that he wants to say but can't quite remember just what it is. "Harrison, just what grid district did you say you were in?" he asked, wrinkling his forehead, vigorously concentrating.

"I didn't," replied the photographer, "but I'm in -- let's see -- the northwest corner of E-3." He took out his grid maps and checked his memory. "Yes, that's right, northwest E-3. Why? Oh -- here come the natives. It's about time!"

Suddenly Martens remembered the half-buried item that had lain dormant in his memory. "Harrison!" he shouted into his microphone desperately. "Run! Get out of there fast! They're not wor--"

But it was too late. On the minivision screen Martens saw a confused vision of a charging horde of yelling, spear-waving savages. There was a scream of pain, then cries of triumph. Then the image tilted, spun crazily, and finally focussed on a rectangular patch of green sky. Across the square of blue a vulturish creature hovered. Then a dark chape, resembling a spear head, grew larger and larger in the screen in what must have been just a split second. The screen went blank.

Back in Von Kelleam Colony, Martens awoke from his desk as if in a trance. "Poor Harrison," he murmured to himself, his voice made almost inaudible through the shock. "If only I could have warned him in time not to pass himself off as a Child of the Sun-God. Why, oh why, did I suggest it? If only I had remembered in time! Remembered that the natives of E-3 are the outcasts of this planet; the colony of athiests!"

THE END

-----Edward W. Bryant, Jr.

MYTHS ^{A N D} LEGENDS

A COLUMN, WRITTEN BY --:-

I I

--:-

DONALD F. ANDERSON

GILGAMESH

Sumer, man's first great civilization, bearing the cities of Ur, where Abraham once lived; Uruk, Lagash, Eridu, and Nippur, and from whence sprang the great cities of Babylon and Nineveh, and later the colorful and almost fairy-tale city of Baghdad, lay lost for almost three thousand years before statues and tablets found in Babylon put archeologists on the trail and their subsequent unearthing of the civilization. By statues and figurines found of them, they appear pot-bellied with long, straight noses and shaved heads. They gave the Babylonians writing, a bit of astronomy, and the legend of Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh was a king, a son of a king, who was also a son of a king, and so on. His strength was that of a hundred men and he ruled with a stout heart and a great passion. A passion so great that it led to his carrying off maidens, married women, and even new brides from their homes and the streets. The people of Uruk loved their king, despite this "minor" inconvenience. They implored the gods to do something about it, and they complied. Getting together, the gods created another being -- strong and handsome, and in all ways the equal of Gilgamesh. He was half bull, half man, the bull portion being from the waist down. He spent his early years in the forests and fields, as friend and protector to the animals. Overcome by jealousy, Gilgamesh sent his most beautiful palace court-essan to seduce this god-made hero, whose name was Enkidu. She did, and the animals shunned him, for he was no longer innocent. He then turned to the city and became one of Gilgamesh's court.

Often the king and his young men of the court would go out and patronize the houses of debauchery. At this time Enkidu was in the party and blocked the entrance. Seeing a chance to show off, Gilgamesh hit Enkidu a harsh blow and the two fell into combat. Never before had the king known an equal, and it was a stalemate. They became inseparable friends, and under the influence of his new friend Gilgamesh threw off his roguish ways.

For many years the friends hunted lions, wild bulls, wrestled, and ruled. Then Enkidu had a dream, and through the priests the god Shamash told them that they must battle and overcome the monster Huwawa to avert the consequences foretold them in the dream. Armed with new weapons the two set out westward across the earth for two and a half years, until they reached the great Cedar Forests. Here they camped, and in the morning battled the monster. For hours Gilgamesh struggled with the beast, and then Enkidu swooped down and cut off its head, where it rolled down into the dark abyss of the Lower Forests. They then cut many cedars and floated them down to Uruk. They were received with great joy and once more they fell into the leisurly ways of hunting and governing.

At this time Ishtar, the goddess of love, enticed the heroes, but remembering what had happened to others who had succumbed to her -- weird deaths and the transformations of men into animals -- they rejected her. Her anger was aroused. Soon after Enkidu fell ill for twelve days, and died on the thirteenth. Gilgamesh's sorrow was great. He begged the gods to restore life to his friend, but it did no good. Then he realized that someday he, too, would have to go to the House of Death, there to wither

and have only mud to eat. But there was one way out -- to find the secret of immortality itself. The gods had given this secret to only one man -- Ut-napishtim, an ancient king who had once survived the Great Flood. Gilgamesh was determined to have the secret, and set out to find the old king. Here the legend splits. One version said that he visited Hades and saw Enkidu, who had been given permission to talk by the gods. They talked over old times and Enkidu gave Gilgamesh what he sought -- the location of the old king. The other version says that he stumbles upon a tunnel and encounters a beautiful goddess. He begs for the information and she finally complies. Then the legend is again joined. Some historians seem to think that the Sumerians and the Akkadians, friendly neighbors, contradicted each other on this part. They worked together, and even had the same gods, but there were minor differences. This may have been one of them. He finally reaches Urshanabi, the boatman, and obtains from him the information about crossing the turbulent waters that surround the old king's palace. He cuts 120 poles to pole his way across, and discards each after using it once -- for to touch the waters is to die. He finally reaches the palace and the king, who is stubborn. But the queen changes his mind and Gilgamesh is told of the Flower of Youth at the bottom of the king's sea. Gilgamesh dives in, swims to the bottom, and retrieves the flower. Now he could give both he and his subjects immortality. On the way home he stops to swim, leaving the flower on the shore. A serpent swallows the flower, and Gilgamesh searches in vain. So came the legend of the immortality of the serpent. Gilgamesh lived out his life in comfort and ease, and died at age 140. His great feats were recorded on stone tablets, hundreds of which were found at the palace of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal of Nineveh, and gave us this tale.

The civilization of Sumer lasted from about 3000 B.C. to the time of Alexander the Great's conquests. It hopped from Ur and Uruk to Nineveh and Babylon. When the Persians conquered Mesopotamia, they incorporated the civilization into their own. Alexander also tried this, but his early death led to abandonment of his great plans. The Sumerians were themselves conquered by the Semites around 2000 B.C. and disappeared, but the Assyrians adopted so much of their civilization that you can safely say that it lived on. Assyria rose to power around 1200 B.C., declined and rose again 300 years later. They switched capitals from Nineveh to Babylon, set out to conquer all of Mesopotamia, and invaded Egypt and Asia Minor. Around 500 B.C. the Persians conquered the country and soon after fell themselves to the Greeks, under Alexander. The civilizations lay across two rivers -- the Euphrates and the Tigris, in southern Mesopotamia. What once was a great land is now desert; where rolled fields of wheat and grain now sand is blown. And where there was once glory, is vanished into the sands of time and quickly covered over...

-----Donald F. Anderson

ATTENTION TO OUR FANTASY FANS: AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:

Here is a note for fans and students of the late master of fantasy adventure Robert Ervin Howard. Glenn Lord, who compiled Howard's poems for Arkham House, is putting out a fanzine to end all fanzines of the sercon variety. It's THE HOWARD COLLECTOR, it is professionally printed on fine paper, and will, Glenn assures me, resemble the Arkham House chapbooks. The going price is 60¢ per copy, and from what I understand it's cheap at twice the price. This, remember, will be actually a limited, professional magazine of fine quality. Those who like reading fantasy adventure and about fantasy writers, send 60¢ to: Glenn Lord, P.O. Box 775, Pasadena, TEXAS. Do it NOW!

Wishing is a tricky business. Take care! Don't be like Phillip, who forgot...

THE FINE PRINT IN WISHES

By Gene Tipton

When the bell had rung and Miss Evelyn Doyle's seventh period music class was dispersing, she confronted Phillip Heath and asked that he remain for a moment.

"I appreciated your Christmas gift very much, Phillip," she said when the two were alone. As she regarded him, her blue eyes held a quality he'd never seen in them before.

"Oh, it wasn't much." His 13-year-old face reddened slightly. He was aware that his pulse beat somewhat more rapidly than normal.

"It struck me as being rather expensive," she stated in disagreement "and you really shouldn't have done it."

"O.K. Next time, I'll give you an apple instead."

His attempt at humor brought a faint smile to her 30-year-old face. It gave him pleasure to look upon that face. It was earmarked by a certain maturity and wisdom, yet appeared to be marred by not a single wrinkle.

"Thank you again," she said simply. And with that, she dismissed him

* * * * *

Walking home, book satchel swinging at his side, Phillip Heath was unmindful of the January wind that bit at his face. A vision dwelt in his mind which he found himself unable to dislodge. It might have been the vision of a capricious, giggling, teen-aged girl in bobby socks, but it was not. A look suggestive of melancholy settled over his features, a look that had become increasingly prevalent of late. He endeavored to hide his forlornity when in the company of his school mates or when at home, but whenever alone this brooding facial expression emerged and did not readily withdraw.

At home, he performed a few chores, had supper with his parents, and went to his room earlier than usual that evening. He looked forward to the privacy and seclusion afforded by his room. There, he could wear whatever expression he wished on his face... There, the strain of pretense and concealment could be eased..

Adorning the walls of the room were glossy photos of movie stars. There were also pictures of composers and orchestra conductors, indicating a fondness for music on his part. In one corner stood a couple of baseball bats; in another, a box overflowing with old comic magazines he had outgrown. Atop the dresser a record player and a football helmet rested somewhat incongruously side by side.

Not the least of his possessions was a small rubber statuette which dangled from a chain about his neck. This he removed and placed gently on the dresser. It was the somewhat marred likeness of a St. Bernard dog, given to him when a small boy by his grandfather. Three years before, he had chanced to get in the path of a shot from a playmate's BB rifle, and "Berney," as he affectionately called the rubber animal, had served as target for the steel pellet, sparing him possible serious injury. Ever since, Phillip Heath had revered the defaced statuette as a sort of good luck charm. It was worn constantly about his neck.

Before going to bed, he surveyed himself in the dresser mirror. He was dissatisfied with what he saw. He wished he might have beheld a man -- tall of stature, mature of face; not an insignificant 13-year-old youth, chanceless in an adult's world. He longed that he might be 30 years old instead of 13. He had developed an enormous, twofold hatred for the number 13. He was averse toward the sum because it represented his age; moreover, the number was disliked because it bore a resemblance, phonetically, to the age he would like to be. Thirteen years, so infinitesimally small when measured with the yardstick of eternity, could be of gigantic, overwhelming proportions when applied to a human life.

That night he had a dream. Recalling the vision the following morning, he was left mystified. In his dream he had ascended a flight of numbered steps, beginning with 13 and continuing to 30. Upon attaining the top step -- number 30 -- the entire stairway had collapsed, with he plunging into a black, yawning abyss.

* * * * *

The clanging bell signalled for the end of Miss Evelyn Doyle's seventh period music class. It was Friday, and an impatient throng of adolescent humanity rushed forth from her room, happily anticipating the upcoming weekend. One student, however, lingered behind, to approach Miss Doyle at her desk.

"Yes, Phillip?"

Her voice, it seemed to him, possessed tones more musical than those emitted by the nearby piano a short time ago.

He spoke in a hesitant manner. "Er -- Miss Doyle, I -- I have a new long-playing album at home by Andre Kostelanetz which I think you'd enjoy hearing. I'd like to invite you over to our place tomorrow and listen to it -- that is, if you're not doing anything else. My address is 413 Spruce Street."

"I appreciate the invitation, Phillip." After a moment's hesitation, she added: "However, I did have something else planned."

She apparently detected the ill-concealed disappointment on his face. "You really want me to come, don't you?" Her blue eyes were fixed on him earnestly. In their depths again appeared that quality -- something akin to tenderness -- they had held on that previous occasion.

"Yes," he replied, "Will you?"

The pallid rays of the January sun that filtered in through the window behind Miss Doyle seemed to inflame her brown hair. They brought out from it contrasting fires of gold. A hint of indecision passed over her features.

"I'm not sure," she told him. "Perhaps I may, at that."

* * * * *

It was a bleak, sunless day. Occasionally, snowflakes tumbled down outside in a haphazard, inconsistent fashion. He stood by the window, looking out, the intentness in his manner bespeaking this to be more than an idle pastime. His eyes had been expectantly fixed on the street for over an hour.

The next few hours were, for the most part, likewise spent, but the one for whom he waited came not into view. At last, with the grey afternoon deepening into twilight, his post at the window was relinquished.

Shortly thereafter, footsteps sounded on the front porch. He hurried to open the door and was greeted by his returning parents. Both had the strange fancy that their son was disappointed by their arrival.

* * * * *

Monday arrived, the dawn of a new week of classroom activities. That evening Phillip Heath's parents noted that he was unusually silent and reserved at supper. He shortly went to his room and attempted to do some homework, but found himself unable to concentrate on his studies.

He looked out the window into the growing darkness, vacantly watching feathery flakes of white that swooped noiselessly against the pane. He felt infinitely small and helpless -- as insignificant as a snowflake. This painful sense of littleness he tended to associate with his age. His 13 years constituted a cruel, unyielding obstacle; they branded him an outsider in the world of responsible, grown-up men and women.

He lovingly fondled the miniature rubber dog dangling from his neck. Inanimate, mutilated by a steel pellet, yet capable-looking, "Berney" was regarded almost as a flesh-and-blood ally. Perhaps because he was already prone to endow the dog form with properties approaching magical, he fancied that in some marvellous way it divined his problems. He even imagined that it leaned its rubber head sympathetically. The inert St. Bernard, to some degree, seemed to fulfill the role of protector and rescuer which has become traditional with live members of its breed.

On an impulse, he placed his hand on the inanimate head, closed his eyes, and made a wish. "Berney" had come to his aid once before; perhaps he would do so again.

"Berney, I wish that Miss Doyle might not grow any older. Please let her stay the same age she is now. Then, some day I will be as old as she is."

The words were spoken with a fervor that surprised him, and only after they were uttered did he become fully cognizant of their absurd, child

ish nature.

Opening his eyes, he looked at the canine figure for a long moment. The immobile face and muzzle impressed him as bearing an expression almost of intelligence, of comprehension.

Foolish as his words had been, they nevertheless embodied his deepest hopes and longings. How he wished that, through some small miracle, they might come true! That yearning still clung tenaciously to his thoughts as sleep at length overtook him.

* * * * *

The following morning, Phillip Heath's homeroom teacher, in solemn tones, made an announcement to her class.

"I'm sorry to inform you all of a sad event which has taken place. While returning from a movie last night, Miss Doyle, the music teacher, was struck down by a skidding car on an icy street near her apartment. She died a short time later. I know that we shall all greatly miss her."

Amid an onrush of grief, the realization came to Phillip Heath that his wish of last evening had indeed been granted. One thought loomed uppermost in his mind. That thought was: one ceases to age in death. Years from now, she would still be 30 years old. Some day his age would equal hers, and eventually he, not she, would be the older one.

---Gene Tipton

ATTENTION LOVECRAFT COLLECTORS AND FANS! Chesapeake Publications, that's us, announce to all readers of MIRAGE, that's you, an important event in amateur publishing. Not since the SSR bibliography of the works of H.P. Lovecraft has there been any one place you could turn to to locate or to find information on any piece of Lovecraftiana. And SSR published only 75 numbered copies, all of which are now very rare. So, we are now planning the first complete Lovecraft bibliography in seven years! Running at the very least 40 pages, with an excellent Prosser cover, this superb booklet will tell you at a glance every known work of HPL -- amateur press fiction, poetry, and essays; professional magazine fiction and poetry; all information on every book or pamphlet by or about HPL; all known anthological appearances of HPL, all known revision and collaborative works, and still more! And it will tell you all known information on where each appeared, up to and including December, 1961! An important work for the Lovecraft fan! MIRAGE #5, which will contain an HPL story and essay, will be printed in the usual number and sent to all on the mailing list. But the biblio will be published in an edition limited to but 50 copies! It will be sent with MIR5 to those paying for it. The biblio's price: 50¢. Pre-publication, that is, 1/5th of the copies are already reserved, so better get your order and money in now. The print order will NOT be raised, and the biblio is being widely advertised at this very moment. So, you'd better get your money in pronto. Should monetary troubles (even with 50¢ per it'll cost us plenty) delay, or should all copies be gone, your money refunded upon request...but you don't get the biblio when out.

THREE POEMS

By George H. Wagner

UPON THE STELE

If a man bears pure fruits as an offering to the gods,
he shall pass through all enemies unencumbered,
his baskets still full, and unrifled by unbelievers.

Let no man masquerade as a priest: neither darkest
earth-magick nor thrice-blessed amulet-charm
can stay the aeon-ending damnation merited by
this wretch.

If a man makes ~~bold noises~~, laughing and talking within
the temple, let him forfeit his tongue; if he
stares mockingly at holy rites, his eyes; if
he wanders about during the chanting of the
Great Lays, his feet; if he steals what has been
set as an offering before the gods, his hands; if
he pays no heed the god-words of the oracle --
and especially if he sleeps during their deliverance--
let him forfeit his ears to the glowing ember.

If an uncleansed priest burns incense before the gods,
he shall be visited in his prayer-chamber by
daemons.

Bury the dead sorcerer far from his powders, his salves,
his aelixirs -- break all his tablets inscribed
with alchemical and astronomical talismans, and
burn all his parchment pentacles blood-drawn
with the evil-eye--that he might not make use
of these things to return from the demented,
shrieking maggot-domain; this terrible self-
necromancy was common in the dust-enshrouded
era before the Dragon of Justice hatched from
the Egg of Truth, and climbed roaring from the
primordial Chaotic Abyss.

Let the child who chances upon the Most Secret Conclave
be chastised according to his age, from complete
forgiveness to painful death.

VISAGE-MASQUE

I--who bring you the night-time terror tales
And breathe them into sleeping consciousness--
Put aside all my sacred, speaking capes
And crystal cauldrons filled with oily inks;
I rip away the ancient visage-masque
To show the poet of the mental mirror--
And even this mad world has never dreamed.

MERLIN, DYING

Merlin said "Bring me my magick sword,
Forged with daemon figures that record
Battles with....."

---George Wagner

BOOKS

The LAST BOOK of EDGAR ALLAN POE by Alan Dodd

Not many people today have read the last book written by Edgar Allan Poe, since he never lived to finish writing it. On his death bed, after the accumulated effects of many years of drug addiction, his hands clutched at a parched throat as though he were the Ancient Mariner of old searching for water in a land where there was "water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink." "Save him," he was heard to say. "Save poor Pym."

But who was Pym? Who indeed? He was the central character of his last sadly unfinished novel THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF ARTHUR GORDON PYM. The story, several students of Poe have pointed out, is Poe's own life. The name of the hero, syllable for syllable, matches that of the author, and the horrors and storms that beset Pym also beset Poe.

This was a story by Poe about himself, but he could never finish it because he could never know how the story ended until he, himself, was dead.

Arthur Gordon Pym is a young man from Nantucket who runs away to sea with the help of a young friend whose father is the captain of a whaler. Knowing that the captain would not have permitted him on board without the permission of his parents, he becomes a stowaway. Arranging with his friend to be concealed in the hold, he agrees to remain there for three days -- until the ship is too far out at sea to turn back.

The hours pass like days for Pym, and at the end of the three days and agonising nights he is not released. Thirst and near suffocation torture him in his prison hold and in the dark claws reach out to grab him. But it is no monster, but his own Newfoundland dog, also smuggled aboard by the friend. Around its body is tied a note which he can only read by the fleeting glimpses of light peering into the hold from above. The words come spasmodically -- "Blood --- remain hidden.....life depends upon it..."

This, then, was the story that was to torture the author the remaining days of his life; a life ended with the deathbed cries of agony for the safety of his own creation -- and himself. But for Arthur Gordon Pym the story is just beginning -- above his claustrophobic concealment in the hold his friend's father, the captain, is dying on the deck in a pool of his own blood. Mutiny has taken place, and the Negro cook is felling the captain's men with a huge axe, as though lopping branches from a diseased tree. The captain's son, along with Pym, is saved for the moment, but there is to follow (as in all dreams of madmen) more plotting, killing, bloodshed until only Pym and three others are left on the shattered, drifting hulk. Terror and cannibalism follow until they are finally picked up by a British schooner.

The final chapter has Pym in Antarctic waters with a faithful half-breed called Peters in an open boat. White, feathery ash descends upon them from the sky and gradually across the entire horizon a vast cataract more terrifying than even that in Descent into The Maelstrom. The mouth ingests the tiny intruder...

"And now we rushed into the embraces of the cataract, where a chasm threw itself open to receive us. But there arose in our pathway a shrouded human figure, very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin of the figure was of the perfect whiteness of snow...."

And there the narrative breaks off. Poe could not finish what he felt was his own story without knowledge of his own demise. So it remained, until one of his readers in France, inspired by his work, decided to

complete the epic. He was later to himself become one of the world's foremost writers, writing in the genre of science fiction. His name was Jules Verne.

A nephew of Verne's, in a sudden fit of madness, shot his uncle in the leg, thereby forcing him into giving up sailing, which he loved so much. In the months of inactivity that followed, while waiting for the wound to heal, Verne turned to Poe's unfinished novel of the sea and composed a sequel to it. At the time it appeared in England as a serial in a boy's magazine where it remained for many years among the collections of the magazine collectors until yet a third party came along.

This sequel was never published in book form until a retired Civil Servant from the Ministry of Works, Idrisyn Oliver Evans, who had been employed in modernizing a number of Verne's earlier works including the translation into English of a number of stories which had never appeared in that language before. On an average, due to this man's work alone, eight Verne books are brought to the bookstalls every year. Evans does not, however, share in the financial rewards that this revitalisation of Verne brings. The publishers, Arco Ltd., owned by millionaire Howard Samuel, pay him a flat fee without any royalties.

Thus, then, through the work of these three separate entities, did the final publication of the last book of Edgar Allan Poe take place:-

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF ARTHUR GORDON PYM by Edgar Allan Poe and Jules Verne, with preface by Basil Ashmore.

What, then, one may wonder, was Verne's fate for poor Pym?

A search party stands around a massive rock in the Polar wastes while above their heads is a body transfixed to it with a rusty musket slung across it. The head is bent and a long beard drags down tail-like to the waist. The fingers and toes are twisted to resemble claws. Is this, in fact, the end of poor Pym? If so, what holds the body there like a magic crucifixion?

The answer to that, I'm afraid, is something you'll have to read the book to find out. After three men spent a part of their lives working on it, their solution and ending is something that needs recognition from the reader and from no one else.

-----Alan Dodd-----

* THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF ARTHUR GORDON PYM can be obtained in the United States through The Fantasy Classic Library, a subsidiary of Gnome Press, Inc., for \$3.00. Send check or money order to The Fantasy Classic Library, P.O. Box 161, Hicksville, New York. Ask also about Pick-A-Book and the other Verne titles in this series.

SEACON! The 19th World Science Fiction Convention will be held this Labor Day weekend, September 2,3,&4, 1961, at the Hyatt House, a newly constructed hotel. The Seattle con promises to be the finest ever seen by fan or pro, and if you can make it by all means DO SO! Join now, though--there's very little time left! Send \$2.00 membership fee to SEACON, P.O. Box 1365, Broadway Branch, Seattle 2, Washington. Checks payable to Wally Weber, treasurer, or to Seattle Science Fiction Club. Guest of Honor is Robert A. Heinlein, whose novel STARSHIP TROOPERS won the Hugo in Pittsburgh last year. And John Campbell will conduct a panel which might just lead to ANYTHING! And there are many more features. Remember -- the Labor Day Weekend! That isn't too far off!

I ONLY HATE PEOPLE DEPT:

HINDSIGHT

Letters of Comment by our readers. The editorial commentary is solely that of the editor. Most LOCs are abridged.

The next two letters, with their mention of censorship in fanzines, do seem to bring up a very interesting point. They yell at me for saying in my fanzine that a bit of censorship on the part of the editor is needed in a certain fanzine. O.K. -- but by yelling at me for coming out for censorship, are they not denying my own right to no-censorship? I mean, if Deckinger can say what he wants about my religion, I certainly have, by the same token, the right to say what I want about Deckinger. Ted Pauls letter is quite long and repetitious, and so I have removed certain superfluous paragraphs. JLC

TED PAULS

: I suppose I ought to begin this letter by thanking 1448 Meridine Dr. : you for MIRAGE which arrived this morning, but the Balto. 12, Md. : fact of the matter is, I've only read a small part of it. Your editorial interests me so much that I don't want to wait until I've finished the zine to comment on it. To begin with, let me state my position on this matter as concisely as possible: while the time of the story's appearance might have been unfortunate -- the Christmas season -- I see nothing inherently wrong with it and I most certainly defend Buck Coulson's right to publish it. Also, I suppose I ought to mention that I am not an atheist but consider myself an agnostic. While I consider religious fanatics among the most harmful people in the world, irreligious fanatics are not far behind. We can well do without both kind. As an agnostic, I believe that there is no concrete proof either FOR or AGAINST the existence of a supreme being, and therefore arguments between both sides never accomplish a purpose. Now then, to return to your editorial. I doubt if this commentary will accomplish anything except to brand you as anti-God or anti-atheist, depending on who you talk to. One trouble is that obviously you wrote the editorial while emotionally involved with your subject matter. This will not help your arguments at all, and may even hinder them to a certain extent, because you make a number of statements therein which you probably would not have made if you had let your mind compose the editorial instead of your emotions. The phrasing and wordage used in the composition of "A Matter of Taste" was carefully planned and very deliberate. Its main purpose was the same as REVELATION's -- to evoke comments such as yours and open discussion in a comparatively lifeless lettercol. This does not, however, mean that I do not feel strongly that the line that must be drawn somewhere and that it should have been drawn before REVELATION. I do not like or respect Deckinger for doing it. He obviously has no respect for the beliefs of the other people inhabiting the same world he lives in. JLC) I refer specifically to your closing comment, which states that neither Coulson or Deckinger are fit members of the human race. This is especially interesting in view of your comment that Deckinger is setting himself up as his own God. What you are doing here is different only in degree: Do you really believe yourself competent to judge who should and who should not be a member of the human race? I don't think you do. Ted remarks in a later letter that he is against all kinds of judgement, including our judiciary system. Ted, you must feel yourself the exception to your own rule. Are you not, in this very letter, judging me? Opinionating, maybe? That's what I claim I was doing in the editorial. Or do you make a distinction between mere opinionating and pure dogmatism? A great gulf you seem unable to see separates the two. JLC) I think that your comment

would have been much better if written from a more objective and detached viewpoint. Saying that you are revolted by Buck because he printed something you didn't like does not harm Coulson in the least, and in fact merely reflects back on yourself. If there is one thing to be found in fandom, it is the freedom of the press. Whether or not Deckinger had any right to author such a "Christmas story" is not the point here, but most certainly Coulson had a right to print it. And, incidentally, I believe that Coulson mentioned that he did not completely agree with Deckinger's position, but that he did not believe in rejecting otherwise good subject matter because he did not agree with it. This is something I agree heartily with, since (1) I despise censorship in any form, and (2) if I rejected every piece of material I disagreed with, KIPPLE /Ted's fanzine/ would run about 12 pages per issue. Maybe I'm just dense, but I just can't see all this furor over Mike's story. As Marion Bradley pointed out in KIPPLE, the same sort of story has been done dozens of times before, and as far as I can determine, there hasn't been any mass condemnation of it by fans. Why suddenly does every religious quack (and, I might add, some well-meaning fans) jump on Deckinger for repeating this old story that's been done so many times before although not in fandom? (And, incidentally, I don't refer to you, Jack, as a religious quack. That term applies to clods like ~~44~~CUT! Comon, Ted! I can't let MIRAGE become a battleground for your feuds. Insult this list in KIPPLE if you like, but let me pick my own fights! I think you, yourself, just hit on the reason why so many people are up in arms over the story. It ~~hadn't~~ appeared as yet in fandom! And fandom is a lot different than it was even five years ago. JLC) And then we come to this sterling comment: "Anyone with any true human decency would have returned the manuscript to Mr. Deckinger with his vomit still on it." Again, since an attack against Mike cannot hurt me personally any more than anyone who has known Mike three years, I would chalk this up to your runaway emotionalism; but I am not Mike and I would imagine that you'll receive quite a blast for this sort of insulting remark. And speaking as one who was once on the wrong side of his nastiness in print, I think that Mike will come out on top with any exchange of insults between the two of you. ~~44~~I can well imagine that Mike would come out on top in such a battle. Nastiness seems to be the basis of his very nature....doesn't it? But while Coulson came out with a short and sweet commentary, which ended in both of us understanding each other's position and beliefs, Mike has not said one word about the entire affair. Nothing in YANDRO, nothing -- not a word -- to me. I'm not going to feud with anyone, but I'll be glad to let Mike have a FULL PAGE in this lettercolumn -- or more -- AND I PROMISE TO PRINT IT EXACTLY AS SENT TO ME -- no additions, corrections, or anything. Not even an editorial comment breakin, although I will reply after its completion. Due to the fact that the next issue is a special anniversary, there will be no lettercol -- but I'll have a special HINDSIGHT 'zine out in a month or two. Now fair can I possibly be? Besides, it was such a beautiful line....~~44~~ In closing, I would like to mention that I invite your reply either personally or in print ~~44~~You got both~~44~~. I respectfully suggest that next time you temper your remarks slightly. There are enough ways to insult people nicely so that you don't have to use remarks such as those I quoted.

Sincerely,

Jack

44Now if you want someone who's really emotionally involved....44

 Paul Shingleton, Jr. : Firstly, I take violent exception to your editor-
 320 - 26th Street : ial in the present issue of MIRAGE. You are being
 Dunbar, West Virginia: most unfair, both to Coulson and Deckinger, as wel
 as fandom in general. You are insulting both Mike
 and Buck and YANDRO without sufficient -- to me, at least -- reason. I
 suppose you know you are holding yourself open for slander by your remark
 re Coulson and Deckinger. 44Why, what with fannish freedom of the press,
 I thought...44 Also, who the hell are you to judge? Why, oh why, doesn't
 Buck have the right to print anything he wishes? 44By the same token, why
 oh why am I the exception to this no-censorship rule? Why can't I print
 anything I want? Someone can speak out against freedom of speech in this
 country and he's within his rights. Are you going to deny him this right
 in the NAME of this right?44 YANDRO isn't your fanzine. It's his. Why
 should we all believe in the fallacy of some book written supposedly by
 some idiot 2000 years ago? Do you have any actual PROOF that God exists?
 No!44 Do you have any proof that He doesn't? I have an open mind. I'll
 listen.44 Why must we all be blind idiots believing nothing, seeing nothing?
 Religion. What good has it done for the world? Ask the Jews who es-
 caped from Hitler's ovens. Better yet, ask the Mormons, who were pract-
 ically driven out of the United States for their belief. 44Oddly enough,
 I've done just that. I know several Jews who escaped from Hitler's ovens.
 I also know two Mormons. The Jews all have kept their faith in God -- and
 all say that it was only their faith that kept them alive. There are no
 Jews, to their knowledge, who came out of the concentration camps and
 didn't give thanks to God. To God, Paul. And those Mormons....they set-
 tled in Utah, I believe. I also believe that they are one of the major
 religions in the U.S. I also believe that they made out pretty good in
 Utah -- and never once lost their faith in God. What good has religion
 done for the world, Paul? Read history. Don't just skim and read the cor-
 ruption in the Middle Ages' churches...they were of one branch alone, too.
 Study history Paul, thoroughly. And then I dare you to ask that question
 again.44 Why, oh why, must you continually try to pound religion into you
 reader's heads? 44Why, oh why, does Deckinger continually try to pound
 atheism into his reader's heads?44 What good does it do? Why shouldn't
 Deckinger proclaim his pro-atheist views? 44 Why shouldn't Chalker pro-
 claim his pro-religion views?44 This is AMERICA; remember that? 44One
 nation, UNDER GOD, indivisible...44 Maybe you're too much of a coward or
 conformist to defend your country, and you certainly don't think that a
 person has a right to his own views.44 Harsh words. Why not practice what
 you -- er -- preach? You're certainly at me for proclaiming my own views.
 Why am I the exception to your rule? I'll tell you why! BECAUSE I DON'T
 BELIEVE AS YOU BELIEVE AND THINK AS YOU THINK! THAT'S your idea of free-
 dom! From your words, it appears to be so, at any rate. Who the hell do
 you think you are to tell me that I cannot have the guts to defend my
 country's ideals when you read a definite Communistic idea into your
 own words? Who are you to order me to think as you do or proclaim myself
 a coward? Who are you to tell me that? DON'T I HAVE RIGHTS? CAN'T I PRO-
 CLAIM MY VIEWS JUST AS LOUDLY AS MY OPPOSITION, WITH WHOM YOU SIDE? Why
 you little bum, you have as much right to tell me what to think as Ken-
 nedy has to declare this country communist! Who are you...or who do you
 think you ~~are~~, anyway? I can get just as emotional as you, brother, and

while in that state I can verbally murder you. Perhaps not Coulson -- I made a truce with him. Perhaps not with Deckinger -- I haven't heard him yet and I have no desire to go to war with anybody. But you, sonny boy-- you and your holier-than-thought dictatorial line of thinking.... I'll murder you. You call me disloyal to my country and then have the utter gall to....oh, shut up! I have no quarrel with atheists. They can believe what they want. I am against the childish idiocy both Deckinger and yourself utilize. JLC) You point out that atheists should keep their views to themselves. Why? I haven't noticed you doing so in MIRAGE. 44Oh come now. Until #3 the nearest thing I came to religion was a discussion of Bokrug, Lovecraft's water-lizard god.)

I LIKE YANDRO.

Ghu bless America,
Paul

.....
Now, kiddies, How was that for getting emotional? Going to sue me for libel, Poul? I can slap on a counter-suit. Besides, we're both under age and to...well. At any rate, I just got mad. I'm sick of everyone making their own rules and then proclaiming me the exception to them simply because my ideas on religion greatly differ. Those were the only two letters attacking me. Here are some more
AVRAM DAVIDSON :
410 West 110th St. :

New York 25, NY. : I am indebted to you for this copy of MIRAGE. I met Don at the Pittcon. I did not read Deckinger's story but from your précis of it seems like a rather tasteless item to appear where it did and when it did. I think that Major Chichester is reading into atheism qualities which it does not by definition possess. He may possess them, and I have no reason to doubt that he does, but the philosophy itself is neutral. It has not, I am quite sure, occurred to you that you cover, by Prosser, in #3 may be offensive to such of your readers who are believing Jews; now, has it? 44Not at the time) To see the symbol of our religion, the Seal of Solomon or Star of David, as well as the word Tetragrammaton, which refers to the four Hebrew letters of the Ineffable Divine Name, coupled with that idiot idol cannot but prove disturbing to us. Are you not guilty of somewhat the same thing as Coulson was? Should you point to Prosser's reference to "sabbat" and "Eliphas Levi" let me remind you that the witches' Sabbath is not derived from the Hebrew word Sabbath (see Margaret Murray's WITCH CULT IN WESTERN EUROPE), and that "Eliphas Levi" was not a Jew but a Roman Catholic whose real name, I believe, was Louis Constant. 44The difference between Coulson's feat and my own is that his was deliberate. Mr. Davidson goes on to say that Lovecraft was sick, depraved, and evil. He notes that A.J. Budrys supports this belief, and urges me not to get too deeply involved with HPL. "It is simply unhealthy." Now, even before he'd written, I don't think that I could GET too much more deeply involved. And I don't feel evil, nor do I share his opinion of HPL. Mr. Davidson's conviction that HPL was evil, says August Derleth, would probably prevent him from making a study of the late master of the weird tales. Or, if not just that, he has obviously already made up his mind. I mentioned that PSYCHO gave me almost the same effect as a Lovecraft tale, and yet I was sure that Bloch was neither totally evil or thought he was his own mother. JLC) Anderson's article on Crete seems to have relied on data published before the recent discoveries in Cypro-Minoan script. There was a fascinating paperbound out recently, called THE DECIPHERMENT OF LINEAR B -- but I can't recall if Ventris was the decipherer or the author of the book.

Formerly it had been held that the Minoan Cretans were non-Greek. Anderson suggests Egyptian origins. But the Linear B Business indicates that they were Greek. Someday I could do you a few pp on the relationship between the Kephtiu of the Egyptians, the Caphtor of the Bible, Cappadocia, Philistines, etc. But not now. ((Don Anderson replies: "As to Davidson's suggestion and note of Linear B, I have read it and found it not to my liking. Ventris was the author, and seemed to be in love with the Greeks, adding and giving credit to them for the Minoan civilization. I'll go along with him that they could have been Greeks, but there have been know in all times of mingling of races. If Mr. Davidson will read my article again, I suggest the migration of the lower Egyptians to Crete. I never state they founded the Cretan civilization, but they influenced it. Could have been Greek and Egyptian mingling, for that matter..." D.F.A.)) Your comment that "Only Communist Party Members are required to renounce God, and they comprise no more than 1% of the total population!" would seem to imply that the other 99% are believers. Tisn't so. ((I know. But I never said that the other 99% were believers, and I know of the methods of athiestic brainwashing you speak of later. I was merely volunteering a bit of information.)) AS THE MISTS CLEARED, by George Wagner, is rather good; and I even forgive him for having hit upon an idea similar to the one I have notes on, intending it to be a sort of sequel to my story KING'S EVIL, concerning another adventure of Mainauduc the Mesmerist. Ah, well, sic friat crispulum, as Randy Garret has it.

Best of luck to you,
Avram Davidson

.....
Dave Prosser, as well as myself, was greatly surprised that many, like Avram Davidson, should take his cover that way. I do not think that Dave should make a public or private apology, but he insists, so here is his explanation of the cover of #3....

.....
Dave Prosser: Jack, I'll admit I'm rather surprised about the responses to the cover. Naturally, no one person can please everyone, as I know that it's one helluva rare occasion when anything I do gets by without a few derogatory or vindictive commentaries. However, this particular aspect has never, as far as I know, occurred before, and I'd like to make this plain: In using the Seal of Solomon in the cover illo, there was not the least part, not one bat-whisker of intent, to imply the least thing of a religious nature. The "Seal" was used simply as a superimposition over the goat to make a rather unique and different symbolic illustration. The entire intent was simply to give an interesting and different type of cover, and since MIRAGE has always seemed to incline more to the esoteric, mysterious, and weird nature of things, this cover seemed ((and was)) rather fitting. I'm so used to people getting aroused over my art that it really, and ordinarily, doesn't bother me, except to the extent that I wish more fans could appreciate certain elements of some of the things I do...and they might if only they would look and consider a little longer than the first glance so many of them never get past. However, this is beside the point, which is that: There was no purpose or intent involved in using the "Seal" except to make an illo particularly fitting for your 'zine. ((And one of the finest covers I and many more have seen! JLC)) It was not used as a backhanded slap at religion as some seem to think. To those who have felt that this was the case, I'll accept your misinterpretation if you'll accept my apologies for using the symbol and causing such an unset sonstitution. I suppose that in this

day it is excusable that some would think of nothing but this interpretation, but on the other hand, it must be remembered that (and this was the way I was thinking of it when it was done) that there are two distinct and different meanings and interpretations to the symbol and its usage; (1) its meaning when used in, and applied to, the occult and magical theme, and (2) its use and meaning as a religious symbol. I'm not going to make an issue out of it, but the fact that it was taken wrongly, and as an affront to religion, is the only reason I'm writing this. I have a great many very good friends who are Jewish (and I imagine that it is this action who are most irritated) and I certainly wouldn't want to do anything to cause ill-will with them. Also (and some will find this impossible to believe, I know) I am a Protestant by title, and I believe in all that religion entails, and while some of my work may imply an anti-religious feeling on my part, it is simply not the case. Perhaps I am more tolerant than this age warrants, but I have good friends of many nationalities, races, beliefs, sects, and colors. One of my best friends while in the service was a Negro boy (and this will cause some neck-hairs to bristle... watch the segregationists and such arise!) and I wish I could find where he's living now; he could turn out some fine art when he wanted to. But this is going far afield. Suffice it to say that I'm sorry the illo offended those whom it did; that was not its intent -- nor was the Seal used as a religious symbol. This typer won't write Korean, so I won't say what I intended to, but instead -- Please pardon.

Dave Prosser

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 Last blank stencil I have is this one, so here are a few quotes from other people: HARRY WARNER, Jr. notes the Seal controversy, and likewise points out that the Menmonites that cared for him in the hospital would deem me a horrible blasphemer for printing the Nelson story. Touché. GLORIA LILLI BRIDGE says that the lettercol seems to be written by a bunch of kooks. ED LUDWIG calls Mirage semi-pro -- thanks! G.A. BIBBY likes M a lot and sends along a buck -- probably the same buck I'd just sent him for the FC Double-thanks! REDD BOGGS says that Mirage wasn't very good really but was "not without originality and was thus refreshing." Thanks?? RUTH BEF MAN gave some criticisms, thought MIR3 was so-so. PHIL HARRELL, who began the Deckinger mess with me by showing me the story in the first place says that .. was a fine piece of work. MAJ. W.S. CHICHESTER, suddenly shipped to Korea courtesy of the USAF, thanks us for MIR3, which he liked, and tells how lousy Korea is. Wonder what the talk around the base would be if one of his subordinates saw MIRAGE? Or, for that matter, his superiors? GLENN LORD likes Mirage, subscribes, tells of early publication of THC. J.T. CRACKEL liked it so much he sent \$1 -- and he's already a subber! T*H* A*N*K*S! We need more like that. ALAN DODD wasn't too impressed, bemoans the lack of illos. We do too, Alan. CLAY HAMLIN said Wagner's story was one of the best he's seen, while HARRY WARNER has said that it was the worst piece of Lovecraftian-like prose he'd ever seen. Ever read DORWICH, Harry? TOM DILLEY likes Mirage a lot, notes the great improvement over #2, and wants more Lovecraft reprints. O.K., Tom. Next issue we're gonna REALLY do it up. Reprint of Lovecraft's Quest of Iranon, and his essay Idealism & Materialism. Also 44-page rider for those who pay -- printed in 50 numbered copies, the first complete Lovecraft bibliography in 7 years. 50¢ -- no trades. All HPL fans will want this because it gives location of all fanzine & prozine works. See ad in FANTASY COLLECTOR for more details... or write us. Everybody gets #5 -- only paying customers get the biblio. And that winds up everything, I think. See you nextish. JI